



DORCHESTER COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL PROFILE

Dorchester County is located in the south central portion of the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Water nearly surrounds the county, with only 20 land miles in its 333 miles of boundaries. The Chesapeake Bay, Choptank and Nanticoke Rivers are major waterways. Dorchester is the largest county on the Eastern Shore with 356,855 acres. Thirty- four percent or 122,928 acres is devoted to agriculture. Much of the southern portion of the county is freshwater marsh or tidal saltwater marshlands. There is, however, much good farmland in that area with a loam or clay loam soil type. The area north of Route 50 is more suitable for vegetable production due to the sandier soil and good drainage.

In 1990, Dorchester had a population of 30,236. Cambridge, the County seat, had a population of 11,514. This is basically an agricultural area, but also supports several industries, and because of its proximity to the bay and rivers, supports a thriving seafood industry. The Blackwater Wildlife Refuge attracts many tourists each year, as well as a diverse wildlife population. Dorchester has many historic sites, including Old Trinity Church, Spocot Windmill and Christ church, where several former Maryland governors are buried.

Agriculture provides the major economic base for the county with most of the acreage in field crops and vegetables. Livestock, including poultry, pork, and beef also plays an important role. The greatest percentage of land is devoted to field crops, much of which goes to provide feed for the shore's livestock industry. Many of the vegetable growers sell their large volume of produce through auction blocks, wholesale markets or processing plants. Smaller pick-your-own operations are beginning to increase in importance.

DORCHESTER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Crop	Year	Unit	Acreage Harvested	Average Yield	Total Production
Corn for Grain	1997	Bu.	19,300	132.4	2,555,000
	1998		20,300	129.6	2,630,200
	1999		18,200	115.8	2,107,100
Corn for Silage	1997	Tons.	*	*	*
	1998		*	*	*
	1999		*	*	*
Soybeans	1997	Bu.	59,000	33.4	1,969,500
	1998		51,600	28.7	1,482,000
	1999		52,700	32.0	1,683,900
Wheat	1997	Bu.	19,000	69.5	1,320,000
	1998		19,200	46.9	900,000
	1999		18,100	63.7	1,152,500
Hay	1997	Tons.	400	4.8	1,900
	1998		700	1.1	800
	1999		700	2.3	1600
Barley	1997	Bu.	6,000	77.8	480,000
	1998		5,900	52.6	310,600
	1999		3,700	70.0	259,000

Crop Production Rank among MD. Counties, 1999				Livestock Inventories Rank among MD. Counties, 1997 ¹	
Corn	6	Oats	3	Cattle	23
Wheat	3	Barley	8	Hogs	10
Hay	23	Soybeans	2	Sheep	3
				Milk Production	3

DORCHESTER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Farm Numbers & Size ¹		1987	1992	1997
Number of Farms		392	347	297
Average Size (acres)		319	357	414
Land in Farms (acres)		125,019	123,762	122,928
Livestock (Number on Farms) ¹		1987	1992	1997
Cattle Inventory	Jan. 1	881	979	651
Hog Inventory	Dec. 1	28,853	15,591	2,529
Sheep Inventory	Jan. 1		31	
Value of Sales ¹		1987	1992	1997

----- Thousand Dollars -----

All Products	51,509	64,089	82,391
Crops	15,031	26,129	34,488
Livestock, Poultry and Poultry Products	36,478	37,960	47,903

¹ Source: Census of Agriculture, NASS.
² Not published to avoid disclosure of individual operations.
³ Unranked - Data not published.
⁴ Revised.
* Acreage too small to publish.

MONTHLY WEATHER DATA - 1999

MONTH	AVERAGE TEMP. (F)	NORMAL 1961-1990	TOTAL RAINFALL (INCHES)	NORMAL 1961-1990
January	42.3	34.9	5.25	3.66
February	39.8	37.4	2.30	3.48
March	44.5	46.5	3.01	3.77
April	56.7	55.4	2.62	3.39
May	66.5	65.2	1.04	3.51
June	73.0	73.6	1.56	3.80
July	81.4	77.8	4.79	3.98
August	77.6	76.3	4.89	4.87
September	70.1	69.9	**3.79	3.67
October	00.0	59.0	2.99	3.00
November	54.9	49.4	1.49	3.16
December	43.4	39.7	2.65	3.45
Annual	M	57.1	**36.38	43.74

** Insufficient and partial data.

Number frost free days for 1999	**
Normal frost free days 1951-1980	199 <i>(1961-1990 Not available)</i>
Highest temperature 07-06-99	100
Lowest temperature 01-06-99	13

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Compiled by the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service
and the Maryland Agricultural Statistics Service.